157 absence of self-restraint, he can give free rein to the typical
554 Amhara fondness for rapid and noisy argumentation, quoting witti-
cisms, puns and proverbs. He does not have to control his typical
Amhara curiosity about non-material objects and human behavior, and
can stare freely and openly. Even his servility to the noble is
[576] only formal and not internalized, for, while he bows deeply from
the hips, his eyes are raised to observe every detail of the situa-
tion (especially to see whether some reward can be wheedled).

The Amhara noble, however, is required to be at least out-
wardly, an introverted personality. This is expressed in formal
dignity, a partly withdrawn and meditative manner, a serious (though
not severe) mien. His bodily movements must be slow and deliberate;
his pattern of speech must be the same. Most of the time he remains
pokerfaced. He has been trained to observe by moving only his eyes,
[152] not his head. He does not express his basic emotions directly,
except with social equals under proper circumstances. He must
appear too proud to show curiosity, even for interesting and strange
articles brought by the foreigner; he accepts them with just a
dignified and appreciative nod of the head.

152 There is the principle of "noblesse oblige". The noble be-
554 haves as if his due will certainly come to him - he does not have
to go and seek it. When a servant has angered him, the noble does
not fly into a rage publicly, though he may have him routinely
flogged later on. It is noteworthy that even the womenfolk among
the nobles share this personality training. Although hysteria is
152 very common among Amhara women, it is rare among noblewomen. Even
554
158 in case of great emotional distress (e.g. if a child has died)
[304] when commoner Amhara women wail loudly, scarify themselves, and roll

152 554 158 on the ground, Amhara noblewomen weep silently or go into states of apathy. This is a more common mental ailment among nobles than hysteria, and may lead to chronic depression and even catalepsy (see Part VI).

157 554 186 However, both the peasant and the noble share certain common Amhara personality characteristics. Both take great pride in being able to "speak well in court". Homesickness is strong among both, and is very widespread. Kings and emperors, until very recently, had great difficulty in sending and keeping ambassadors abroad, for the diplomat regarded his foreign assignment as "exile". Both classes share great pride in their highland plateau, defended for many centuries against all comers. This national vanity is at least in part due to long ignorance of the world beyond (sometimes hardened into xenophobia); pride in their ancient religion and in the national epics like the Solomon-Sheba-Menelik. These are shared by Amhara of all classes.

829 Amhara concepts of government administration are aristocratic: ruled by the noble "great man", who is usually descended from a feudal warlord of past centuries. The military camp and its direct significance for traditional Amhara social structure and government has been described in Part III. At the top of the hierarchy is the king or emperor (King of Kings). At the Amhara grassroots is the peasant, who seeks justice by attaching himself to a "great man" as retainer, so that he too will be treated "with honor" by reflection. From the bottom to the top of the hierarchy of government, persons on every level perform the ceremony of "dāj tenat" (lit. waiting by the gate) to obtain jobs, maintain positions, or merely to prevent doubts about personal loyalty from arising through absence. This

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

411 181 standing at the long church services. Above all it is a weapon of offense and defense, and every Amhara male is supposed to be skilled in its use. When the *dulā* is so employed in Manz, the *bānnā* blanket is usually wrapped around the left arm to form a quick shield, the *dulā* raised high with the right to bring down on the adversary's cranium. The blows are sometimes fatal. The Manzēs are proud of their facility with the lethal stick, and nearly every district in Manz boasts that it is real "*dulā* country."

726 533 181 The Manzēs also excel at *shīllalā*, the Abyssinian war chant. This is a form of boastful verse—partly intoned, partly shouted—which is declaimed by warriors to "heat their blood" before hitting the warpath. Children in Manz start practicing *shīllalā* almost as soon as they leave the breast. The following [539] is a good specimen of Manz *shīllalā:*

Agarātchn Māmā agarātchn Lālo wanzātchn Dangazē;
Mān abātu yāzzāl imbi senīl gizē.

Our land is Māmā, our land is Lālo, our stream the Dangazē;
What father will order us when *imbi* we say!

Imbi is an interjection used by children to express "No!" There is a double pun in this couplet. *Mān abātu* ("Who is the father?") is a profane idiom meaning "bastard." "To say *imbi*" is another idiom, meaning "to refuse." The second line may thus be also rendered as:

What bastard dare shove us around when we tell him to keep off our lands!

181 865 152 [577] The Manzē code asks that a man be ready to defend his land and church by force. It does not approve wanton aggression. But the Manzē's disposition is notoriously aggressive, for his emotional life is relatively devoid of warmth and, on the other hand, fighting is so highly rewarded. Children are urged to be adept with the *dulā*. Their temper tantrums are welcomed as signs that they are brave. As a result the men of Manz are often overcome by the impulse toward physical aggression; assault and murder are recurrent events on their fields and trails and at their marketplaces. The discrepancy between the *norm* of physical bravery, which is operative *in certain specified circumstances,* and the *general character trait* of aggressiveness comprises a major theme in their emotional life: they feel obliged to look for justification for the aggressive actions which they have been conditioned to want to carry out. This disposition is illustrated in the words of the Manzē youth who said:

I want very much to kill somebody. The only problem is I'm not strong enough. Perhaps one day I will be. Why is it all right to kill? People kill sheep, don't they? And sheep are innocent, they don't know anything, don't do any wrong. But man knows, he knows much, and still he does wrong: every man is bad. I wouldn't kill everybody, only the bad ones. If I had an enemy, I would kill him. Maybe I will become a soldier, and kill my country's enemies.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in time of crisis, but otherwise occupy an inconspicuous place in the Amhara's world. His prayers and oaths, his calendar, and his simple precautions against evil spirits are matters of habit. He has no driving concern with the supernatural in his daily life.

In the human realm, collective symbols and endeavors are not a major focus of attention. The demands of family, church, and state are, like the seasons, familiar and unproblematic; like nature, these institutions call for simple adjustment. On the personal side, sexuality plays a modest part in the Amhara's outlook. Sex as such is not talked about much. It is enjoyed, beneath the surface of social life, with little fuss or problems other than the usual practical ones.

By contrast, the phenomenon of man's aggression is seen, discussed, pondered, and worried about to a considerable extent. The Amhara sees himself and his fellows as prone to aggression as soon as hunger no longer checks them or festivity has raised their spirits. He is wary of the stranger, forever fearful that the unfamiliar *saw* may attack with the evil eye. He sees the outsider as bent on aggrandizement, constantly plotting to seize his patch of earth. How to keep man's potential for aggression under control is a recurrent question in Amhara experience. The Amhara considers a pitiless regime of fasting to be the only way he can keep his hostile impulses subdued, and believes that children must not be spared the rod lest they be rude and aggressive. He withholds esteem from young men on the grounds that they are prone to throw insults and pick fights. On the other hand, he sets up occasions, like the whipping battles on Buhē and the rough play and insulting at Christmas, when the acting out of aggressive impulses is controlled through being carried on in a legitimate context. He idealizes the men of peace, the priest and the elder, for their work in putting moral pressure on people to observe the fasts and to reconcile quarrels.

At the same time, the Amhara peasant is greatly concerned about ways and means of improving his capacity for aggression, both through the technique of litigation and through violent means. He trains his sons to be brave and to fight well, and chants with enthusiasm the inflaming martial verses of *shĭllalā*. He idealizes the fighter as much if not more than the man of peace. Litigants, hunters, and warriors keep vital the Amhara ideal of masculinity, which every peasant must cultivate in order to protect his land and his honor.

The Amhara peasant is simultaneously preoccupied with the stimulation and the control of aggressive behavior. The previously mentioned conflict of norms regarding violence is perhaps the chief area of moral conflict in his thinking about the good life. Though nature, God, and other aspects of man's life occupy much of his attention from time to time, it appears that the phenomenon of human aggression dominates the confrontation between the Amhara peasant and the objects of his experience.

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*883 178 581 brides be virgin. Related norms greatly restrict their quest for romantic love. Since Ethiopian society still expects its maidens to be shy and retiring, and to avoid social relations with boys outside their families, the boys find few *883 834 178 opportunities for getting to know members of the opposite sex. Even in those few situations where sociability between the sexes is publicly permitted, ingrained tendencies to segregate the sexes persist. The most liberal context for such sociability, the University College campus, has witnessed relatively little interaction between male and female students. In spite of their occasional resolutions to act more boldly, the college boys have in the past tended to shy away from the co-eds except during such rare formal events as a college dance or off-campus parties.

883 836 178 548 834 This is not to say that modern adolescent males have no opportunity for premarital sexuality. On the contrary, their opportunities in this regard are perhaps better than ever. The proliferation of brothels in Ethiopia's urban centers makes sexual initiation easy, almost a routine event. Students also frequent these houses for social entertainment, dancing to swing and Latin rhythms, and sipping beer or soft drinks. Thus the continued sanctions against social intercourse in more respectable forms work to sharpen the Amhara dichotomy between decency and sexuality, and leave modern boys with a double standard that separates the marriageable girls from the enjoyable ones.

*883 178 581 584 [152] The idea that marriage should be founded on romantic love has brought greater anxiety as well as hope into the lives of Ethiopian adolescents. This anxiety is due in part to the above-mentioned inhibitions against that easy commerce of the sexes which so facilitates the discovery of a suitable love object. It also reflects a certain ambivalence toward the new ideal, based on a lingering attachment to the authority of the old system. This was manifest, for example, in the response to a college debate on the topic, "Resolved: that the custom of letting the parents choose a spouse for the children should be maintained," that took place in 1959. Although on anonymous questionnaires *90 per cent* of the college students said they will probably decide whom to marry themselves, and only 3 per cent said the decision would be made by parents or other relatives, in voting on the matter after the debate the students (in contrast to the judges who awarded the negative debaters) publicly declared themselves 42 per cent affirmative, 41 per cent negative, with 17 per cent abstaining.

*883 178 581 586 Anxiety regarding the new conception of marriage, finally, is also connected with a new-fashioned fear of divorce. The mind of the modern adolescent vacillates between the ideal of an abiding marital relationship based on

152 * Due perhaps to the greater importance of their peers, sexual accomplishments have now become a frequent topic of conversation and a matter for boasting among modern adolescent boys.

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883* 581 586 178 [152]

love and the image of the traditional Amhara marriage, likely as not to end in divorce. This sort of concern was expressed in a revealing way in the following statement by a twenty-year-old college student:

> The main thing I want in my wife is good character. Beauty is not so important. Of course she will be an excellent cook. But mostly I am concerned that she be the *right* one for me; I do not want to get divorced. But you can't really know if she is the right one until after ten years of married life. If after having about five or six children it turns out troublesome, I will have to leave her. A person cannot go on living that way.

883* 178 581 589

In some instances, ironically, this quest for the perfect marriage leads to a rejection of the very institution of marriage itself. Seven per cent of the students questioned indicated that they do not want to get married eventually—either because they "could never afford it," they "would be happier living single," or they just *"do not want to enter a relation that will end in divorce."* Thus at a time when the stability and warmth of family life are needed more than ever, the very possibility of family is doubted.

581 177

Some Ethiopian students blame the deteriorated family and an alleged increase in divorce in their country on the impact of Western civilization. True, the introduction of the Western concept of marriage and of the rudiments of a modern occupational system have dislocated the traditional arrangements for marriage; and other related problems, to be discussed in the next chapter, plague the Western-educated elite. But Western civilization has also developed resources to begin to cope with analogous problems in its own societies, and perhaps it is not too soon to acquaint Ethiopia's youth with some of these: for example, the recent developments in man's understanding of the dynamics of marriage as well as more sophisticated conceptions of the ideal and importance of family life in modern society.

CULTURAL ORIENTATION

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A generational conflict manifests itself further with respect to questions of belief, taste, and value. Because of differences on such issues, students and their parents have grown far apart. The more traditionalist of the older generation refer to the modern youth as *ya-sĭmmĭntaññă shi lĭjjotch* ("children of the eighth millennium"); that is, of that corrupt time the Amhara believe will precede the destruction of the world. The latter, in turn, refer to the old-fashioned as ignorant, uncivilized, sometimes even "savage."

883* 561 178

Yet, as we have been suggesting, this conflict is by no means total. Amhara adolescents are too deeply attached to many aspects of their traditional culture to engage in wholesale rebellion. Because of strict childhood training they remain basically respectful toward their elders. In addition, they often prefer to champion their own traditions in the spirit of a freshly excited nationalism.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the government schools. The weakening of family controls by the new school environment has slightly reduced the importance of loyalty to kin in the students' scheme of things, and has significantly reduced the moral authority of religious customs. A third sphere of norms—respect and obedience toward elders and persons of authority—is maintained by the hierarchical school system, officially headed by the Emperor himself. However, the ambiguous status of foreign teachers and their frequent inability or unwillingness to play the traditional authoritarian role tends to weaken this, for the possibility of informal, even joking, relations with foreign teachers gives Amhara students their first taste of a more relaxed relation to authority figures. (Unprepared by any other experience for such a relationship, their reaction tends to be one of exploiting the permissive teacher as much as possible while at the same time losing respect for him.)

Finally, the expectation of physical stamina and aggressiveness in the Amhara *goramsā* is carried over into the school setting but with definite modification. It prevails in the feeling that one must not tolerate insults or be cowardly. It also persists in altered form in the new pattern of athletic activities instituted by the schools. On the other hand, the greater camaraderie expected among schoolmates means that aggression must also be carefully controlled. An indication of the psychological difficulties to which the crowded yet sociable conditions of school life have given rise appears in response to the question: "What is the worst thing that could justifiably be said against you?" The most frequent sort of answer to this question relates to unchecked aggression: "Quick to anger," "quarrelsome," "ill tempered."

Of the new moral values inculcated by the school system, some of the main ones appear to be self-development via education; honesty; sportsmanship; and social responsibility.

Ethiopians often speak of the "value" (*tĭqem*) of education, meaning thereby the path to a well-paying job and a higher standard of living. But one would be mistaken to suppose that this explanation exhausts the meaning that education has for the modern adolescents. The freeing of their imagination and the exercise of previously unknown intellectual capacities prove themselves thrilling experiences for each new class of students. And their most preferred pastime is "reading," their most popular films are educational ones. A number of students spontaneously declared, when asked about the real reason they go to school, "to learn about the world" and "to learn about humanity."

In the traditional culture of Abyssinia, learning was highly valued, to be sure. But its task was to produce a class of literati capable of transmitting the hallowed beliefs and symbols. Education for the sake of inquiry as such or for personal development was never permitted in its program. If the value of

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THE PHENOMENA OF AMHARA ORALITY

Shortly after an Amhara child is born some butter is placed in his mouth. This is done in the belief that it will keep his voice from becoming harsh. From that moment on, the mouth never ceases to be an organ of extraordinary importance in his life. Its cultural importance is reflected in the attention given to it in the Amharic vocabulary: Baeteman's *Dictionnaire Amarigna-Français* lists some sixty idioms built with the Amharic word for mouth, *af*, more than are listed for any other words in the language except "eye," "heart," and "earth."[4] The organ is publicly celebrated in such proverbs as: "Cleverness of mouth, to the master; cleverness of hand, to the slave."

The oral zone is of course of universal significance. Some items of oral imagery probably appear in most languages, and manifestations of oral libido appear in many forms familiar to Westerners: the French love for gourmandism, the German passion for beer-drinking and singing, the American addiction to cigarettes, chewing gum, and "life-savers." Many of the less familiar phenomena to be related below in describing Amhara orality, moreover, are found in most of the cultures of Africa and the Middle East. But such phenomena often appear inconspicuously alongside other culturally patterned impulses and sublimations stemming from other phases of psychosexual development. What may distinguish the Amhara—and doubtless some other cultures—is the extent to which the oral zone is an object of attention and a source of behavioral modes and expressive symbolism. The Amhara, it appears, have a preoccupation with orality.

This preoccupation is manifest in three different kinds of phenomena. There are, first of all, aspects of Amhara culture which express a strong positive attachment to the infantile experience of sucking, in pure and in numerous sublimated forms. These we shall designate as the phenomena of *oral erotism*. Second, there are the aspects of Amhara culture which express a strong positive attachment to the oral zone as a center for various aggressive activities—the modes which Erikson calls "incorporation by biting," "oral retention," and "oral intrusion." These we shall collectively designate as the phenomena of *oral sadism*. Finally, there are phenomena which express a conflict about the gratification of many of these oral desires; and these we shall refer to as the phenomena of *oral ambivalence*.

Oral Erotism

Feeding at the breast is a prominent and beloved experience in Amhara life. The Amhara infant is suckled whenever he wishes, at the slightest show of desire. Since he is rarely separated from his mother it is easy for him to satisfy himself at any time of day or night. Popular beliefs about breast-feed-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ing support this permissiveness. If a baby is not suckled whenever he wishes to be, it is believed that he will become sick or will not grow strong, and the negligent mother is looked on as one of evil character.

Not only is the infant's desire to suck freely indulged, but it is indulged for a fairly long time. The normal period for breast-feeding is two to three years. Only if a new sibling happens on the scene is weaning deliberately effected. If another child is not forthcoming, and the mother is not ill, there is no inclination at any time to deny the child the breast. In many cases nursing continues until the child is four or five, when his work obligations begin to interfere.

The attitude of oral permissiveness is manifest in other ways. Thumb-sucking is accepted with good humor, and when a baby is in a bad mood he may be given his father's or mother's thumb to use as a pacifier. Though Amhara are otherwise very modest, mothers do not hesitate to offer the breast no matter where they happen to be. When referring to the process of breast-feeding, Amhara males invariably cup one hand under an imaginary breast to depict this common and natural event. When speaking to persuade a guest to accept a second glass of beer, the Amhara host has recourse to the formula: "But your mother's breasts are two!" Another indication that breast-feeding is a very familiar part of the Amhara's social environment is that in interpreting the TAT cards, a number of respondents interpreted some scene with children as a situation of breast-feeding, although this was not depicted on any of the cards.

The emotional context of breast-feeding is more significant than the physical pleasures involved. Until he leaves the breast the Amhara child inhabits an emotional paradise. He receives much attention and is fondled by both parents and by other relatives. He remains close to his mother at all times, sleeping alongside her at night and spending the day near her when not tied in a bundle on her back. He accompanies her thus to visit relatives, attend market, or go to church. Only when the mother goes to fetch water is he separated from her, for there is not room for both baby and water jug on the mother's back, and besides, water holes are the abodes of evil spirits who may try to make the child sick.

After he is weaned, the Amhara child enters a much harsher emotional atmosphere. He must adjust to a regime of commands, responsibilities, and punishments. He is nostalgic forever after for the warmth and security of his earliest years, a condition vividly associated with the experience of sucking at the breast. The prominence in Amhara culture of this association of emotional security with breast-feeding is shown by such phenomena as the mammary symbolism of the rooftop and the institution known as the "breast-father." The former consists of a clay ornament, whose color and shape clearly replicate the female nipple, which is placed atop the breast-like conical roof which

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

covers the Amhara home.* The latter is related to customs concerning adoption.

The adoption of children among traditional Amhara takes place through a ritual in which the child sucks the honey-dipped thumb of his intended foster parent. The latter thereby becomes the child's *ṭuṭ abbāt*, or breast-father. In some cases the child actually sucks the nipples of the *ṭuṭ abbāt*. Used metaphorically, the image of sucking someone's breast is employed to indicate becoming close to, or ingratiating oneself with, a superior; breast-feeding is so explicitly connected with emotional security that people are inclined to allude to it when finding a new source of security.

The Amhara's attachment to passive, pleasurable activities centering on the oral zone appears in a wide variety of forms. Manipulation of the lips is one of these. Amhara often stand about fingering their lips or rubbing them against some object, much as people in another culture might scratch their heads or stroke their chins. Children may be humored by having their lips played with by a relative. The frequent covering and uncovering of the mouth with a part of the toga, that is so characteristic of the Amhara, may be a sublimated form of this.

The lips are used in Amhara culture for a variety of expressive purposes. The Amhara identify persons and places, not by pointing with the finger or hand, but by distending the lips in a certain direction. Kissing, while seldom used for romantic purposes, serves a number of other expressive functions. Relatives or friends of either sex kiss each other on both cheeks after a long separation, the older or superior in status kissing first. Children and servants greet their superiors by kissing their feet, which they also do to show gratitude for some favor. One kisses one's own hands before extending them to receive a gift. Kissing one's fingers is done to signify an oath or a special appreciation of something, the meaning being "I swear by it."

Religious sentiment is typically expressed through kissing. The devout Amhara kisses his fingers and touches the table to show thanksgiving after a meal. The church is greeted by kissing a part of the building, and going to church is referred to as "kissing the church." Following devotional services the priest's cross is kissed by all present, and often the Holy Book is kissed as well. When the ark is brought outside on holidays, reverence is shown by falling to the ground and kissing the earth.

While, moreover, romantic kissing is an uncommon activity among the Amhara, Amharic literature at times represents this activity with poignant intensity. Thus, in an unwritten Amharic couplet one hears:

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* The Gurage, by contrast, place a straight stick atop their homes. So do the Amhara of Gojjam Province.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

261 To make me forget you, this medicine is right:
271 Food and water, sleep and the night.
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• • •

Love and porridge must be taken while hot;
Once cool, those who would taste are a lot.

• • •

The *ĭnjarā* I have, my lass;
I wait for you the *wat*• to pass.†

• • •

Your father and your mother have vowed to keep from meat;
But you, their very daughter, innards do you eat.‡

261 Eating and drinking provide expressive symbolism in social interaction as
264 well as in verse. They form the primary axis of social life among the Amhara.
271 The exchange of *gurshā* is but a specialized form of the general pattern of
155 expressing sociability through feeding and being fed. Camaraderie consists to
57 a large extent of eating from the same *ĭnjarā* basket, and the etymology of
the word for "friend," *bālĭnjarā,* is the same as that for the English "com-
[203] panion," someone with whom one shares bread. At any indoor gathering
barley beer is served continuously. The visit of a guest at any time of day
calls for "a little coffee," a euphemism for as much food and drink as the
[776] host can command. In some Amhara areas a special kind of spirit, the *ţonin,*
is assigned the specific task of punishing persons who infringe the etiquette
of dispensing and receiving food.[12]

574 From this it is but a short step to politics and morals. The production of
155 large banquets is one of the essential arts of government in Abyssinia—
[554] *panem,* if not *circenses.* The stature of a big man depends partly upon the
number of persons who customarily dine at his expense. A man's Christian-
577 ity, moreover, is judged by his generosity in feeding others, a virtue that is
554 eulogized at times by parading his *ĭnjarā* baskets around the field. A truly
574 Christian Amhara is known by the regularity and scale with which he pre-
155 pares memorial feasts for his departed kin, drinks in some religious fraternal
[735] association, and holds an annual feast (*zĭker*) in which food is distributed
to the poor.

155 Oral activity is prominent, moreover, not only as a primary source of
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[263] • *Wat* is the sauce in which the *ĭnjarā* is dipped.

† The gold meaning is: "I'll wait for you until the others leave."

‡ "To eat someone's innards" is an idiom meaning: "to make him fall in love." The gold meaning is thus: "You made me love you."

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

pleasure among the Amhara, but also as a typical response to situations which arouse anxiety. The crisis of death is met first of all by a prolonged ritual of wailing, and this is followed by a series of memorial feasts which occur on fixed days following the person's death. Any kind of bad news evokes repeated exclamations of "Ay! Ay!" When a child or wife is punished, the response is a prolonged and monotonous yell usually out of proportion to the actual pain felt. In the anxious hour before battle, war chants and boastful cries tune up the warriors' spirits. Moments of great awe, finally, such as the appearance of the holy ark when it is brought out of the church or the arrival of some great political personage, occasion a shrill ululation.

Response to illness was the anxiety area chosen as an index of positive fixation by Whiting and Child in their cross-cultural study of *Child Training and Personality*. They assumed that a fixation on oral gratification would express itself in a preference for therapies which involve swallowing something.[13] In this area, too, Amhara culture displays a preoccupation with orality, and not just in the form of swallowing. Something akin to a general principle for oral therapy appears in the well-known Amharic proverb: "For headache, shout on it! For stomach-ache, eat on it!"

A number of the oral therapies practiced by the Amhara are naturally functional, such as drinking a purgative made from leaves of the *kosso* tree to cure tapeworm, or eating a kind of unleavened corn bread to arrest dysentery. Beyond this, most of their magical therapies are also oral. Drinking holy water (and sometimes bathing in it) is believed to cure nearly every sort of affliction, from rheumatism and leprosy to eye and ear ailments. In some regions it is believed that eating the liver of a hyena will cure syphilis. Psychotherapy, too, often relies on oral remedies: the *zār* on a patient is often placated by feeding him, via the patient, a sumptuous meal. Oral types of prophylaxis are also to be noted. Garlic is eaten in order to prevent malaria. Certain kinds of animals are eaten on special occasions in order to ward off sickness. Finally, there is the remarkable phenomenon of the *lālibalā*, a night singer, who can protect himself against hereditary leprosy only by singing out loud in the night air.

In general, one can say that the Amhara have a tendency to attribute magical efficacy to oral incorporation and, to a lesser extent, to the adroit use of language. The latter belief appears in the assumption that human problems are solved by attaining some particularly fortunate verbal formulation, and in the association of outstanding wisdom with unusual mastery of language. The former appears in beliefs and legends which associate eating a lot with the attainment of unusual bravery, longevity, and physical strength. A legend about the invader Ahmad Grāñ, for example, relates that as a baby he was able to consume fourteen bowls of *ǐnjarā* at one sitting. A num-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ber of Amhara folk tales, moreover, have as their central theme the resolution of conflict or the attainment of mastery over the environment by means of eating something or presenting food to someone.[14] It is a theme conspicuous in the legend which celebrates the ascendance of the first of the Shoan Amhara emperors, Yekuno Amlāk (1270–85). According to *The Book of the Riches of Kings,* Yekuno Amlāk ate by chance the head of a rooster which had been set out for a king of the rival Zāgwē Dynasty:

> And this youth Yakuno Amlak found the head of the cock which the woman had left by the fire-place, and he took it and ate it, and it filled his belly, and it made him an exalted person and so mighty a man that he was superior to every other man of might, and it made his face to shine like the light of the sun, and his majesty filled all the other servants of the king with awe, and all the people feared him, and they marvelled at him, and they loved him exceedingly, and they placed him in their hearts, and they recognized that the grace of God was upon him, and they said, "What is the thing which hath come upon this young man?"[15]

Oral Sadism

In addition to subserving a passive, receptive mode of relating to the environment, preoccupation with the oral zone also figures in Amhara culture as the locus of a variety of aggressive modes of behavior and fantasy. Hostility is expressed by a number of oral gestures. Sticking out the tongue and spitting on the ground in front of somebody, for example, are two forms of non-verbal insult. Biting the lower lip is an indication of anger. Touching the tongue, and then forehead, chin, and cheeks, signifies "You just wait!" When fighting, men sometimes bite one another's ears. The activation of a strong biting impulse in situations of military combat is suggested by the following refrain from an Amhara martial declaration, recorded over a century ago:

> Oh brothers, you are hungry and thirsty! Oh true sons of my mother,
> Are you not birds of prey? Come on! There is the enemy's flesh.
> And I, I will be the rider to butcher for you! Forward,
> And if you lack hydromel, I will give you my blood to drink.[16]

The theme of cannibalism appears in various forms in the Amhara imagination. One of the common subjects of traditional Amhara painting is the story of the cannibal Balaya Sab. His name is in Ge'ez, and means "Eater of Men." The story about him derives from one of the old legends collected in *The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*[17] Balaya Sab was a wicked man who fed on the flesh of humans. At his death he appeared before St. George, who measured his evil deeds against his good deeds on a large scale. On the side of evil deeds were placed the souls of all those he had eaten, so heavy a weight that the devil began to make ready to carry him off to hell. Then

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phenomena, traits inherited from earlier traditions and retained through inertia, and that no psychological processes need be invoked in describing them. But this argument fails to explain why, in view of the harmful physical and political consequences of their excessive fasting, the Amhara should have developed in the direction of increasing rather than alleviating their fasting burden. For Abyssinia's commitment to fasting was well known by her enemies, and used to her disadvantage: Ahmad Grāñ took advantage of the country's weakness during Lent to launch his attacks at that time year after year, and the Galla hordes who succeeded him did likewise. The argument also fails to explain why the taboos on pork and tobacco, and the fasting prescriptions, should have been pushed to the forefront of Amhara Christian consciousness. For observance of these mores is considered the very crux of Christianity by traditional Amhara. Amhara often refer to fasting as the most important part of their religion. If a person fails to fast, his relatives are technically absolved from the duty of providing memorial feasts for him when he dies; let his soul wander in darkness! Fasting more than anything else protects them from the devil and enhances the likelihood of their entering paradise.

Apart from their adherence to these cultural norms, moreover, the Amhara also manifest anxiety regarding oral gratification at the purely psychological level. There is, on the one hand, a constant undertone of concern among Amhara about getting enough to eat, even under favorable agricultural conditions. On the other hand, there is a good deal of concern about the consequences of eating too much. There is much worry among the Amhara about the dangers of excessive eating at the conclusion of periods of fasting. There is also the fear that if one indulges in eating and drinking he may become uncontrollably hostile, a fear expressed in the previously mentioned notion of *ṭegābaññā*. These and other forms of anxiety about oral gratification are expressed in a number of folk tales, in which eating, drinking, singing, talking, or simply opening one's mouth result in such misfortunes as sickness, loss of property, and death.[20] A similar theme appears in the epic *Glory of Kings:* the Queen of Sheba, in satisfying her thirst by drinking from a goblet which King Solomon had placed in her bedroom, thereby forfeited her right to immunity from his amorous desires and was obliged to yield to his embrace.

Ambivalence regarding oral aggressiveness, finally, may be discerned in the Amhara's anxiety about being eaten, an anxiety which should probably be interpreted as an externalization of unacceptable oral-sadistic impulses. Traditional Amhara have a morbid fear of being "eaten" by those with the evil eye, *budā* and *ṭayb*, men who are believed to destroy their victim by invisibly sucking his blood. It is largely because of this fear that children are kept away from strangers. Similar projections appear in connection with other well-known figures in Amhara culture. Another fearful object is the *çhirāq*, a giant

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cannibal with eyes in the back of his head. (The specter of the *çhirāq* is sometimes evoked in order to frighten children into behaving properly.) Still another figure is the *salābi*, a person who is imagined capable of spiriting away a man's harvested grain by means of magic incantations.

Without delving into questions on the cultural origins and social functions of oral ambivalence among the Amhara, one can understand how it comes into being in the individual by looking at what happens during childhood in Amhara society. It is true that, if one abides by the hypothesis on this subject supported by Whiting and Child's cross-cultural study, the phenomenon remains puzzling. Their theory attributes a high degree of anxiety about oral gratification to a low level of indulgence of oral gratification in early childhood and a high level of frustration during weaning. This particular hypothesis is not consistent with the data on the Amhara. As we noted earlier in this chapter, oral gratification is indulged among infants to a very high degree by Amhara mothers. There is considerable variation in Amhara practice with regard to weaning, moreover. At times the advent of a new baby or a mother's sickness may require abrupt weaning, in which case a bitter substance is put on the mother's nipple to discourage the infant. In many cases, on the other hand, weaning occurs so gently and spontaneously that little or no frustration is involved for the infant. The relative frequency of these two procedures is a question for which adequate data have not been assembled, but the norm seems to be a gradual departure from the breast, after the child has been happily adjusted to eating other food for more than a year.

Even if the Amhara child is not frustrated by too little indulgence of sucking and too severe weaning, he is nonetheless deprived in two other respects as he emerges from infancy. One is nutritional. Medical studies of Abyssinian children suggest a dietary deficiency beginning in the second half of the first year, and persisting throughout early childhood.[21] It is possible that this relative decline in biological well-being contributes to a sense of deprivation toward the end of the breast-feeding period.

The emotional situation of the child after weaning presents a more visible area of frustration. Amhara childhood is marked by a fairly sharp discontinuity. This may be illustrated by the fact that many Amhara boys are nurslings at the age of three and shepherds at five. The narcissism which has flowered during the nursing stage is dealt a series of blows as the young child becomes subject to the responsibilities, punishments, and suppressed status which are the lot of Amhara children. According to contemporary psychoanalytic theory, this sort of change in emotional support has far more significance for the development of behavioral tendencies than the mechanics of the weaning process; and what psychoanalysts have posited as a possible

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of shepherds,[19] as well as the secret formulae of magicians, the obscurantist constructions of wax and gold, and the use of Ge'ez itself in the presence of illiterates. Related to this is the great popularity of riddle games among Amhara. Personal relations, moreover, are consciously predicated on the harboring of secrets, or *mĭsṭir*. The Amhara assume that it is improper to reveal oneself fully, to disclose one's *mĭsṭir*, to anyone but a very close friend; and that, in fact, rarely happens.

Given the weakness of horizontal forms of cohesion among the Amhara—sociability at mealtime, stylized politeness among equals, and co-operation in time of crisis, important though they are, cannot contain the centrifugal forces just described—the dispositions which sustain a minimum of social order among the Amhara are expressed through vertical, hierarchical forms of interaction. Here both individualistic and solidaristic forms are in evidence, the latter in the forms of deference and begging, the former in the variety of authoritarian relationships.

Perhaps the most characteristic form of interaction among the Amhara is that of *domination*. The Amhara is at his happiest when he is in a position to order someone about. The sense of domination is marked not only in relations between nobles and commoners, officers and soldiers, masters and servants, but also between husbands and wives, and parents and children. Amhara children sometimes volunteer the explanation of their desire to have children when they grow up as based on the explanation that then *they* will have youngsters of their own to command.

Connected with the passion to dominate is a predilection for administering physical punishment. In all of the relationships just mentioned corporal punishment is an integral feature, particularly so on the domestic scene. With sticks or whips, masters beat servants, teachers pupils, husbands wives, and parents children. The complete acceptance of this pattern was shown by the fact that not a single Amhara TAT respondent objected to any of the corporal punishment cards. They all assumed that the punishment depicted, including that of husband against wife and mistress against servant, was deserved, proper, and would have a salutary effect. (One of the respondents even exclaimed when rega ding one of the beating scenes: "What a beautiful punishment!") The only reservations expressed concerned the possibility that the punishment might be so severe as to wound fatally the person being punished, in which case the punisher would have cause for regret.

Whatever the functions of such patterns in controlling antisocial behavior and securing adherence to the norms of the situation, the sentiment that underlies them is primarily egoistic. The superior is interested primarily in having his own way and gratifying his ego through the sheer exercise of his power; and the motivation of the punisher probably often contains a strong